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A SIMPLE FAITH

TO correct a possible misunderstanding. In most Unitarian churches the language used from the pulpit is not less simple than in other churches. The difference lies in the difference of ideas and the manner of expressing them, and that presumably is what Unitarian churches are for. In any case if a minister is driven to obscurity and difficulty, as he may well be, he will always do his best to reach his congregation, and he can hardly do more than that.

The word simple can be very much a question-begging word. A large proportion of the Unitarian churches use the liturgical services, the "Orders of Worship". These presumably are not more difficult than other liturgies. But they are far from simple. Few members of congregations could give an adequate definition of many of the words used, such as grace, spirit, charity, Providence, fostering Love, and so on. Indeed, few ministers could put their hands on their hearts and say off-hand and in the right context what is meant by "presumptuous sins" or being "innocent of the great transgression". And the Orders are crowded with such difficulties. Many Unitarian congregations, in company with most Christian congregations regularly use such phrases as, "Who is the King of Glory: the Lord strong and mighty the Lord mighty in battle?" They are simple enough, but what on earth do they mean? There are of course explanations, and for many Unitarians adequate explanations, but they are not simple.

The Open Service

What is meant by such phrases as "alternate mercies of the darkness and the day," or, "who maketh darkness that it may be night?" There are explanations but they are far from simple. To assume that what is usual and accepted is simple, is to apply a meaning to the word that is never intended.

Many congregations attempt to avoid such difficulties by using an open service, but simplicity here can be far from adequate. Every minister knows the prison of phrase and thought from which he must try to escape in order to use "open" prayer: and many a congregation has winced under the burden that such prayers can fall into.

The truth is that the language of religion is near to the language of poetry, that of repetition and seeming obscurity, until it is learnt. The language remembered from the past both of religion and poetry is never simple in the sense that it can be used without effort, and at some

point or other intellectual effort. Whether such language should be used or not is a matter of decision, but it is not a simple decision in the sense of being easy.

Not Simple

The words of Jesus Christ are not simple, they only appear to be so because they have been reflected upon so long by the religion which uses them. Not one of the great parables can be understood to-day in their full depth and meaning without some knowledge of their background. Such difficulties as these seem absurd to more people outside the churches than in them. It may very well be that the new scientific civilization will sweep away any attempted understanding, say, of the words of Jesus Christ. It may well be that they will have to be learnt again—as young people have discovered in countries where the words have lost temporary currency—but the relearning will not be easy, it will be extremely difficult.

The greatest simplicity in religion is found in the nature of the saint, but the nature of the saint in depth and range defies exposition. It is so complex that it cannot even be dramatized. No saint has ever been depicted as a character on the stage.

The whole truth of the matter is that when there is real communion of a fundamental kind within a congregation, and between a congregation and the minister, then there is simplicity, no matter how "simple" or "obscure" the religion may be. There are depths beneath the depths of supposed communication.

The Need

There is much that is difficult in Unitarian churches of the harsh and frustrating kind, and readers of *The Inquirer* are constantly reminded of them. But there are no panaceas. The starting point of growth lies at what already exists and nowhere else. If there is obscurity there then it exists, if simplicity then that too exists, but it all belongs to the faith that exists; and no other can be manufactured for there is nothing from which the manufacture can be made. That there is a faith is witnessed by what is already there, but of what does it consist? It is assumed all too easily that this is known, and hence the panacea. It would be simplicity of the right kind, the kind that would include humility as well, if questions were asked, such as, What is our faith? What is its nature? How can it be articulated? These are the questions that all living religions are constantly asking, and they lead to something far more

difficult than panaceas or exhortations. The frustration may well lie in the fact that the questions are never asked in the way that enables answers to be found.

It may be that the first revival that will take place in Unitarianism in current conditions—so different from anything that existed in the nineteenth century—will take place when Unitarians ask themselves the far-from simple question, what do we believe together? rather than, what keeps us apart? And the real lead to revival will be undertaken by those who will give time and dedication to such a task. This may not lead at once to an increase in congregations, but it would transform a general situation that occasionally has more frustration in it than collective faith.

ONE POINT OF VIEW—

By Tom Wardle

It is not impossible that the New Year will see the commencement of a foreign policy by the Soviet Union which will indicate her readiness to meet the Hungarian demands even on the question of neutrality for Hungary. This was of course the issue which brought Soviet forces into Hungary. When the Nagy Government declared that it was contracting out of the Warsaw Pact the nervy militarist element in the Kremlin leadership forced the intervention. It was a parallel situation to that which would be created for the West by the withdrawal of, say, Italy from Nato, or which has been created by the demands of Cyprus for independence. Where questions of military security are concerned the Powers' first reaction is to abandon political and diplomatic considerations. But it is ultimate folly, for the Cold War remains what it has always been—a political war—and every abdication of political processes in favour of military ones must be reckoned a defeat. If it were not for the fact that both power groups have recently been engaged in military recklessness the Cold War scoreboard would be showing a vastly different reading. As it is both errors cancel themselves out, but cancel themselves out to the detriment of both and not to their advantage in the minds of the vitally important "non-committed" nations.

The most both sides are now able to do is to cut their losses and concede to politics. It is a strange thing this—yet in a situation where greater military power than ever before is in the hands of major nations, it is less effective. Lenin once described war as "the extension of politics (or diplomacy) by other means". That may have been true in Lenin's time. It is not true to-day, for war has become the collapse of politics, the defeat of diplomacy. And not only large-scale war. Every little war, because it is potentially the Big War, is now redundant even before it gets really started.

Creative Action

It has always been argued by some that violence was self-defeating, but often the argument had to be qualified by the phrase, "in the long run". Now history has been telescoped, the long run has become the short run, ultimate values have become merged with immediate practicalities; the avoidance of war is no longer merely a moral question, it is a matter of survival.

One distinguishing feature of the lives and teaching of many of the best-remembered exemplars of our race has been their recognition that the ideal world and the "real" world were actually one, ethics and common sense penetrated each other, what was right was also what was best. Those who have refused to encourage war or to participate in it have not easily been able to make this point in the past. But it is evident to-day. War is redundant. Or if it is not, then man is. We have come to the end of the line.

What now is to be said, what is to be done? It is interesting that with this present international awareness we may be approaching that condition which Gandhi argued as the necessary prerequisite for effective non-violence—the prior and basic determination not to resort to violence whatever the provocation. It is true that in Gandhi's case his decision for non-violence sprang from motives quite other than the fear of death, but none the less the pre-condition is the same. To take this decision for non-violence, to take it in advance, and to take it as binding, did not mean for Gandhi, or de Ligt or Sheppard, that it was merely a decision, that nothing particular came of it. The taking of the decision was then creative since it meant that they were obliged to find other ways of meeting problems than the ways of violence. This very necessity developed in them an ingenuity of non-violence, that, to the extent that it was allowed rein, proved surprisingly, practically, effective.

Non-Violence and Religion

Some people, most especially in the Christian pacifist movement, hold that non-violence is ineffectual unless it emerges from a religious decision. I have never believed that, and indeed it seems that many of the classic demonstrations of non-violence have been brought about through practical necessity, because those who used the method had no other means to hand. Where there is religious inspiration however, a non-violent campaign can be sustained and given creative direction. If it is true that the sustained use of violence can have a brutalizing effect, might not the reverse also be true, that the sustained use of non-violence can have an ennobling one? Many who began as supporters of the Gandhian method in India, for practical reasons, were drawn to absorb the full implications of Gandhi's thought and his relationship to God.

The Indian independence movement was the largest movement of non-violent social change that we have seen in recent years. It has been followed by a smaller campaign of non-violent resistance to racial injustice in South Africa and a widespread movement of the same type in the Southern states of the U.S. This latter, which was centred on Montgomery, Alabama, has proved, in the 12 months of its history, almost totally successful in the aims which it set itself. It has completely revitalized the Negro Church, and many a white one too. Its effects may yet spread far beyond the area of its origin.

Current Implications

And now latterly, in east Europe. To those who have followed events there closely over the past five years it has been possible to see the steady build-up of a vaguely-conscious movement of non-violent resistance. In east Germany, Poland and Hungary especially, concessions have been won from the occupying power through non-violent methods. The Polish situation is what it is to-day largely because of the refusal of the Poles to attempt large-scale violent insurrection. They have achieved a position in relation to the Soviet Union roughly equivalent to that demanded by the Nagy regime in Hungary at the height of its success. It is obviously only the fear of Germany that compels Gomulka to remain within the Soviet military orbit. If that fear is ever decisively removed we might well expect in Poland a foreign policy of "active independence" similar to that pursued by Yugoslavia.

Perhaps before many months are out we shall witness discussions between Russia and the West for the establishment of a "neutral belt" of nations in central Europe, which will include Hungary. If so we shall have the Poles and the Hungarians to thank for it, and mostly for those who had the wisdom and courage to struggle by non-violent means. The implications of these recent events extend far beyond east Europe. There have been repercussions in Russia itself, there may well be further repercussions throughout the whole world. Has the time not come, for we in the West to consider the creative use of non-violent techniques in world politics?

—AND ANOTHER

By G. D. Sempill

IT cannot be said that the recent and continuing tension in international affairs has done much to bring the Church and the Churches into closer relationship with the population of these islands. So far from giving a lead which all could follow, the Churches have been no more able to speak with one voice than have the politicians.

The voices which have attracted most popular attention are, naturally, those which have shouted loudest. These have been the voices of the more belligerently pacifist. Outside the Church they have been largely misunderstood. They have alienated the sympathy of many by the tenacity with which they cling to the notion that it is either possible or desirable to have good without evil or "peace in our time". But much more numerous than the pacifists are those who, though they may desire peace for their own ends, are too realistic to expect it. So the gulf tends to get ever wider between the Churches and those who have learned to look to science rather than to religion for guidance.

Tension Between Opposites

Probably that gulf will never be completely filled in, but at least the margins of it might be made more productive of good if those who are loyal to their Church were to make more effort to understand the conceptions which govern the lives of those on the other side.

They could safely concede, for example, that a valid discovery which science has made is that it needs two levels of differing potential for a current of energy to work. We can all apprehend, even if we do not wholly understand, that the phenomena of nature "may all depend upon certain forces by which the particles of bodies . . . are either mutually impelled towards each other, or are repelled and recede from each other". (H. Macneile Dixon, *The Human Situation*, Chapter XIV.)

From that discovery science has gone on to avail itself of the further discovery that tension between opposites is essential to activity. All of us, inside the Church as well as out, fundamentalist as well as liberal, benefit from this discovery. The very heating of our churches depends upon it.

The Churches would be better understood by the world to which their message is supposedly directed if they were to recognize likewise that it is a tension between opposites in the moral and religious spheres which makes a good life possible.

The Churches all profess to seek peace, but the fact that they remain divided is sufficient to show that they too are governed by this law of nature—the same law under which the wheels of a clock go round.

Where pacifists go wrong is in imagining that this law can be abrogated. If they had their way, not only would atom and hydrogen bombs and all nuclear weapons be banned—by one set of potential belligerents—but all that gives to life's increasing conflict the zest of adventure would disappear. There might be peace. The Church might become one. Life would become altogether different. But do any of us want it so different as all that? How many of us, were the choice allowed us, would refuse another life, not in heaven but here on this distracted earth? If we are as fond of peace as we make ourselves out to be, why are we so afraid or, at least, so reluctant to die?

Not An Easy Life

No one now expects the next hundred years to provide an easy life. It is not the same now as at the beginning of the century. It was then thought that progress was inevitable. We, having seen two world wars and hovering on the brink of a third, do well not to be so optimistic. But there is as good reason now as ever there has been to trust in God. If

we do so and if we sustain the will to live which God has implanted in us, we shall be as exhilarated by our difficulties as men have been in the heroic periods of the past. Walking humbly, we shall find both the objectives and the means of attaining them which are necessary for those who would labour together with God in his perpetual creation of the world.

Are we to despair because hate is more manifest in the world to-day than love? The darkness of hate is necessary to show up the light that love is. It is doing so. Hate has had such free rein the past fifty years that it is difficult to pull up, but it is now running on such a heavy course and with such obstacles to negotiate that pull up it must.

In what Dr. Arnold Toynbee not unjustly describes as a "post Christian" world the Church is not the force she used to be. But her influence for good is still not negligible. Perhaps it is all the greater for her having had to renounce the more extravagant of her claims to world hegemony. In the United Nations Christianity has not the only say. Of the world's millions who are there represented, the majority are other than Christians. But against the background of these facts the opportunity is greater than ever before for the Church to show that Christ is the hope of the world.

Even if in this post-Christian age science counts for more than Christianity or any other religion, human nature has not altered. There is still no peace for man between his lower and his higher nature, and the conditions of to-day provide as high a test of manhood as ever before. The conflict between the flesh and the spirit has not been ended even by modern science, nor is it always the flesh that wins. Neither is it the heaviest armour. *Vide Hungary.*

What the present situation requires of the Church is that she realizes more clearly than do the pacifists that tension is inseparable from life on this earth. Those outside the Church understand life to be a conflict. Manifestly that is what God designed it to be.

COMMENT

National Dependency and Old Age

ALARMING pictures are sometimes drawn of the economic consequences of an ageing population. It has, for example, been estimated that the number of people over 65 will increase by about 40 per cent during the next forty years, and doubts have been cast upon the capacity of the national economy to sustain a population in such disequilibrium. A recent article in the *Times*, from the pen of Edward Hindle, F.R.S., Founder-President of the Institute of Biology, has put the problem in its true proportion. In the first place he points out that more and more attention is being given to the problem of finding work suited to the capacities of older persons, and that "by altering the pace and providing suitable conditions, much useful work could still be contributed by industrial workers past the usual age of retirement".

The tendency, too, in professional classes is to raise the age of retirement, especially where the accumulation of knowledge and experience is more important than original work. More important still, however, from the national standpoint, is the fact that, although statistics suggest an alarming increase in national dependency, they are largely counterbalanced by the fall in the number of children needing support, and by the decrease in the number of unemployed females.

The conclusion is thus reached that the national dependency in 1995 is not likely to be much different from what it is at the present moment. If along with the change in the age-composition of the population, there goes a more intensive study of the medical and psychological problems of old age, an ageing population ought to be accepted with less pessimism than is usually the case.

Why Do Men Work?

On a Brain Trust recently, Sir John Wedgwood, a director of the well-known pottery manufacturing concern at

Barlston, Staffs., said that most men, in his opinion, worked because they liked it, and that the pay packet was not necessarily the decisive factor in a man's work. This view is supported by a report issued by the Medical Council under the title, *A Study of Attitudes to Factory Work*. This deals mainly with the results of investigations carried out in three large mass-production factories—cars and metal-rolling. Most of these men were employed on fairly simple forms of repetitive work, and only ten per cent of the men expressed dissatisfaction with their job.

One-third complained of the monotony, but the general conclusion came to was that provided working conditions are good and men are adequately treated and paid, men are likely to be reasonably satisfied with jobs that possess little intrinsic interest. It was noted, however, that wages became relatively more important as the job became more repetitive. Physical conditions of work were not, as a rule, dominant considerations; and for many the social and economic aspects seemed to give the main cause of satisfaction.

There was, however, one human characteristic that seemed to stand out strongly, namely, that dissatisfaction did not arise simply from the work itself and the remuneration and other circumstances; it was comparison with others that was decisive in many cases. This is a factor that bedevils many human situation. I heard of an old lady, the other day, who lived at a home for old people who were able to pay for their keep. She was very well satisfied until another old lady arrived, whom the proprietress kindly accepted at a much cheaper rate than the others. Unfortunately, the others got to hear of it, and now whenever anyone goes to see the old lady in question, there is nothing but complaints that although she pays far more than Mrs. X, she doesn't get any more for it.

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

I have just been reading a fierce attack on "the secular Trinity"—the principles included in the slogan, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, the pursuit of which is said to be the reason behind the lack of dynamism which allegedly dogs the British State at the present day. These ideals, it is said, even if they could be defined, are will-o'-the-wisps and are themselves incompatible, and the impression given was that unless we find other guides we shall speedily find ourselves in a state of degradation from which there can be no return.

The author of the article—the front-page article in the *Times Literary Supplement*—says that bad manners, brutality to humans, abuses of authority and the power that goes with wealth have always existed, and that therefore it is idle to expect that they can even be reduced by changing the social, economic or political framework of human society.

My knowledge of conditions in Britain goes back only 40 years, but from what I have learned from such inquiries as those conducted, for example, by the Webbs and the Hammonds, and also from those who, to escape poverty and irregularity at home went to what are now the Dominions, conditions in Britain even from the angles mentioned in that front-page article, are immeasurably better than they were a century ago and less; and even so far as my own observation goes, one does not see to-day those bitter forms of poverty and dependence that seemed taken for granted 40 years ago.

About 1925 I went in a bus to one of the least attractive parts of London. The bus was practically empty, and the conductor told me how great a change had been effected in the district in his own experience. "Why," he said, "at times you would hardly have liked to walk along the pavements, unless a policeman was in sight." I asked him what had made the difference, and the reply was to the effect that people were now better educated. There may be some incompatibility between the elements of the secular Trinity, and they may be unsustainable in their completeness, but

political wisdom has not been misled in its efforts to distinguish and realize in fitting proportions their admittedly elusive elements.

Commentator.

WHY BE A MINISTER?

By Peter Jones

(Mr. Peter Jones was a theological student who did not become a minister.)

AT an open-air service a minister was once asked the following question by a man in his audience: "What have you to say to this", asked the man. "Christianity has been in the world for nearly two thousands years, and yet look at the state of the world". "Yes, my friend", quickly replied the minister, "and water has been in the world for over two million years, and yet look at the state of your neck".

A neat answer, and one that probably succeeded in quelling the questioner, but let us look at the story more closely, because by his answer the minister merely succeeded in condemning his own profession. Water has indeed been with us for millions of years, and the man's neck was undoubtedly dirty, but this was not the fault of the water, it was the fault of the man for not applying it. And Christianity has been with us for two thousand years, and yet in the words of the question, look at the state of the world. Nation still speaks war unto nation, and one has only to consult the pages of *The Inquirer* to read of the social unrest and moral disintegration which prevail. Except in methods of annihilation mankind would seem to have progressed little and deteriorated much since Jesus Christ first spoke his Gospel of Peace and Love. And what of the churches in these troubled times. Many congregations have been forced by economic circumstances to disband, others are dwindling, there is a lack of recruits for the ministry, most of our ministers are forced to struggle along on inadequate salaries; and, worst of all, the voice of the church counts but little in our modern civilization, modern man has little use for the church and the parson.

And yet there are few who would dare to suggest that Christianity is the cause of these evils, any more than water is the cause of dirt. The fault is not with Christianity, but with the lack of it. Why then, if the Christian teaching is the panacea to all our ills, do we not make use of it?

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When I finally came to consider whether I should or should not enter the Unitarian Ministry I put two questions to myself: I have been unable to answer either of them to my own satisfaction. Is the Protestant Christian Church as a whole succeeding in its purpose? To answer this we must first decide what the purpose of the Church is; and to say merely that the purpose of the Church is to propagate the Christian Gospel is, to my mind, not enough; we must go deeper than that. All human institutions have been created to satisfy some specific human need, and we may safely say that the Church has been created to satisfy a spiritual need that is common to all men. But if all men have this spiritual need why is it that such a small proportion of the population regularly attends a church? Why is it that so many of our churches are constantly fighting against annihilation because of lack of support? Why is it that people who are seriously interested in spiritual and religious matters seldom set foot inside a church?

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The second question which I set myself was: Is the Protestant Church in its present form justified in its existence? It is obvious that it is a good thing to give thanks

unto the Lord, and it is a good thing that there shall be a House set apart where people may gather for that purpose. But the Church is more than a Temple of Worship, it is a vast and complex organization, with many aspects both religious and social, and one which needs a great deal of time, labour and money to maintain. To me this complex organization which has been created in the name of Christianity is a little puzzling. Nowhere in his teaching does Christ suggest any such organization; indeed, he seems to have had little use for temples and even less for priests. We know that it was his custom to visit the synagogue on the Sabbath, and we know that when he visited his home town he read the lessons there, but apart from this there is very little mention in the Gospels regarding worship in the synagogue. It seems to have been Christ's custom to worship in whatever surroundings he found himself, and when he wished to pray, to seek out some place away from his fellows where he could be alone with his Father.

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I think that most people are too ready to assume that the teaching of Christ and the Christian Church are one and the same thing, and that however much divergence of opinion there may be between the different sects regarding the details of Christianity they all manage somehow to be one hundred per cent Christian. This is, I think, a dangerous assumption. I think that if we were to consider the average Unitarian Church fearlessly and boldly; if we were to disregard those activities which come under the headings Scholarship, Social Gatherings and Welfare Services, we should be surprised to find how little remained. The first purpose of a church is to propagate the Christian Gospel and to help its members live the Christian life, and if all the energies of a church are not directed to that end then that church is a failure no matter how varied and how successful its other activities may be. One often hears a church official say of a church activity (such as a Dramatic Society): "Oh, it's very important because it gets people together and helps them to take an interest in the church". Such an attitude is deplorable, and in such churches one often finds that extra-church activities have large followings while a mere handful attend service. It would be far, far, better if the church officials were to say: "We have NO Dramatic Society, or Sports Club, or U.Y.P.L., and we have no social gatherings of any kind, but we do have the Christian Gospel and if you wish to learn of it and to live the Christian life, this is the place for you".

FRIENDSHIP LEAGUES

By Anthony Steele

SUCCESSIVE Ministers of Health have stressed the need for voluntary service in our hospitals. The National Health Service provides for all the essentials of the hospital's care and treatment of patients, but the League of Friends of the hospital serves to contribute those little extra luxuries and the extra attention that can make so much difference to the lonely patient. In order to emphasize the value of such friendship leagues, the last Minister of Health, Iain MacLeod, started one in his home neighbourhood of Enfield in his out-of-office hours.

The work of these leagues are varied and give many opportunities for the practical application of love.

For example, the Friends of Exmouth Hospital last year presented 400 dozen eggs to the hospital to help with the diet of the patients and in addition spent well over £500 on comforts such as bed-tables for the wards, garden furniture and fresh fruit.

The League of Voluntary Workers of the Burnley Hospitals gave some of the chronic and aged sick a couch outing

to the coast during the summer months and at Christmas all the chronic and mental patients received gift parcels. What a pleasure for those alone and without a friend in the world! Television sets were also provided for the wards of those too aged and infirm ever to leave their hospital again. An additional set was adapted for the use of a patient in an Iron Lung.

At Halifax, 50 voluntary workers visit the hospitals to talk to otherwise unvisited patients, write letters for the helpless and to do personal shopping for the bedridden. Members of the Junior League visit old people and are always available during visiting hours to guide visitors to the ward they are looking for.

The League of Friends of Stapleton Hospital, Bristol, formed four years ago, arranges for flowers to be delivered weekly to the wards, provides a weekly record request programme relayed through the hospital, and has given couch and car trips to patients.

The staffs of the hospitals are not forgotten either and recently the Rahere Association of Friends of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, presented the nurses with a swimming pool. Other leagues have given television sets, piano and sports equipment to the nurses' homes of the adopted hospital.

I have given just a very few examples of the work of the four hundred friendship leagues which exist throughout the country.

Anyone interested in this humane work, which is carried on at the most personal level, can join in the work of the Friendship League of his local hospital, or if none exists, then he can get advice on the formation of a league from the National League of Hospital Friends, 23 Knightsbridge, London, S.W.1.

Honour For President Of The General Assembly

Mr. C. H. Pollard, City Treasurer of Hull, and President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, was awarded the C.B.E. in the recent Honours List. Previously, Mr. Pollard was an O.B.E.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters should be addressed to the Editor, "The Inquirer," 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1. They should not in general exceed three to four hundred words in length.

A Simple Faith

SIR.—Dr. Agnew and I find it so difficult to understand each other that I begin to hope that I misunderstand him. My letter was no defence of the purveyors of jargon, of intellectuals who discuss whether God is "Wholly other" at the wrong time and the wrong place. It was a protest against the charge that they who visualize religion as binding the peoples in peace and charity are moved by low motive.

My interest in the work of the U.N. has made me appreciate the spirit of goodwill in many wearing different religious labels.

At the same time I felt increasingly that political peace would be only a superficial thing unless accompanied and supported by religious peace. As Viscount Samuel wrote: "Religion unites, but the religious too often divide", and the instances given were, "the tension between India and Pakistan", "Israeli Jews and Arab Moslems", "Ireland is cleft in two along the line that divides Catholics from Protestants". These divisions exist because religious values are attached to non-religious concepts. Surely the people who speak of "Religion behind the religions" are they who seek for clarification and simplicity, and who seek to exalt the love of God and Man above belief in any Holy Scripture, and in complicated structures of doctrine supposedly raised upon that foundation.—Yours,

Leslie

John Hinkins

Sir,—I have followed the correspondence on a simple faith with much interest. Could it not be that the answer to Dr. Agnew's problem is that we are not people of simple faith? We have come to our present position and have sought to understand our spiritual state through the windings of the Christian Tradition. Christianity in its simplest and most intelligible form is Orthodox Christianity. Reject the fundamentals of Orthodox Christianity as they are understood by simple people—the Virgin Birth, the Deity of Christ, the Atonement, the Resurrection, etc., and if you are to remain a Christian in some Modernist or Liberal sense, you are confronted with the task of reinterpreting those doctrines as myths and then translating them into human realities which the ordinary man in the street can understand. A few people have attempted the reinterpretation more or less successfully but I don't know of anyone who has succeeded in putting the results in simple language. It is anything but a simple faith.

Of course Dr. Agnew may define his Christianity as the teaching of Jesus—but here, too, the supposed simplicity of the teaching of Jesus is deceptive. Jesus appears to have been quite conscious of this fact. Referring to some of those listening to his parables he said, "seeing they do not see or hearing they do not hear or understand". Does Dr. Agnew find this saying simple and easy? Why did Jesus speak in parables if it was possible to express his faith in plain straightforward language which all could understand? Was he trying to deceive people? Or was he trying to defend himself against a certain section of the crowd who would tear him to pieces if they knew what he was talking about? Or did he choose to proclaim his gospel from its fundamental depth for the few who could understand (not necessarily intellectuals). At any rate, this question is far from simple, and is a serious invitation to those who find the Gospel of Jesus simple to think again, and seek the profundity behind the simplicity. Is the familiar doctrine of "turning the other cheek" simple? Would Dr. Agnew advocate the practice of this doctrine to ordinary people in its simple form? I doubt it very much.

A Liberalism which might be described as "Christianity in its simplest form" was perhaps possible 50 years ago but it is scarcely possible in present conditions in England and much less possible in a Europe that has seen two great wars, Nazism, Stalinism, and the horrors of the concentration camps. No emasculated Christianity can meet the need there now—people there find the answers of Orthodoxy more simple and more real. We cannot defeat either Orthodoxy or the Materialism which it has produced by a superficial faith; we can only defeat these things by a more profound faith, which somehow will lead itself to simplicity of expression and not only find response in the intellect, but also in the hearts and lives of men. I doubt very much if the reinterpretation of Christian mythology is the simplest or most direct approach. I certainly have not detected any greater simplicity in the writings of Christian Liberals—Unitarian or otherwise, than I have found in the people who seek the religion behind the religions. It may well be that the latter will achieve a simplicity quite impossible to those who insist on following the fascinating but tortured windings of the Christian tradition as the only way to a modern faith for life.—Yours,

Rotherham.

N. J. Teape.

Unattached Unitarians

Sir,—It has been brought home to me very forcibly during the past eighteen months what a tremendous amount of support our movement is losing from unattached Unitarians.

The Postal Mission and N.U.F. are doing what they can so doubt but this does not meet the need to any great extent.

May I give my own case? We have moved some 18 miles from the nearest Unitarian Church which is reached only by an inconvenient bus journey. My mother, an active and enthusiastic Unitarian for some sixty years, manages to attend the fortnightly service by staying overnight with different friends; I do not know how long she will be able to keep this up. The rest of the family—my husband, not unsympathetic to our movement though not a member, a small daughter whom I sincerely hope will grow up with Unitarian ideas and ideals, and myself—have practically no contact.

Several years ago I wrote a letter to *The Inquirer* making an urgent plea for an all-out effort in starting small groups in as many suburbs, towns and large villages as is at all possible. Now, being myself one of those unattached Unitarians, I make it again more urgently than ever.

I am aware that our Ministers and willing Laymen are already overworked but I maintain that the time has come for all our Ministers to be "District Ministers" with the primary object of starting small groups in their areas.

I believe, too that our larger churches should be left to carry on themselves as many small ones have had to, thus freeing

Ministers to undertake this other pioneering work. At least two places in the area from which I am writing could, I believe, have had such groups—perhaps only of six people, the number is immaterial—if an active lead could have been given at the right time.

Personally, I am convinced that this is the way our future must lie, large congregations and big churches by all means where the support is sufficient, but it is through many small groups, not a few large churches, that the Unitarian cause will make itself known and pass from strength to strength.—Yours,

Wootton, Bedford.

Kathleen E. Arciszewski.

Moral Stranglehold

Sir,—Your issue carrying the article on "Moral Stranglehold" has just reached me. I do not understand this sense of Moral Stranglehold in regard to the massacre of Hungary *vis-à-vis* the Anglo-French action on the Suez Canal, which I think you mean we should all feel. The two situations, as I see them, are quite different, indeed quite opposite. Moral judgment on the one is not involved with moral judgment on the other.

In the case of Hungary a people has been, and is, revolting desperately against the savage tyranny of a foreign oppressor. In the case of the Canal region a cunning dictator has for months, running now into years, been growing more and more intolerable and aggressive. There is no need to commemorate illustrations. Unprovoked attacks on a neighbouring state, complete disregard for treaty obligations, the pilfering, if not plundering, of the British base, by the Canal, which under freely negotiated treaty obligation he was committed to protect. These are opposite situations. That is one point. Here is another.

Hungary is hurling herself against the might of Russia, Nasser, on the contrary, and to the dismay of more than one Arab state, is involving himself with Russia more and more. There can be no doubt that while Hungary desires to be free of the Russians, Egypt with the connivance and co-operation of Nasser was destined, and as far as his leadership is concerned probably still is, to become a Russian base. Is not this, then, the central issue? Britain and France went in at Port Said to prevent a collision, actually on the Canal, between Israel and Egypt, a thing that UNO was, at the time, neither able, nor willing, to do. They prevented that collision, in any major sense, and little thanks they got for it. But what else did they do? They exposed the fact that Russia was already there, on, and at, the side of Egypt, bolstering up her armaments and morale. It is therefore clear that both in Hungary and Egypt the trouble-maker was Russia. If so, it is hard to see why one should feel a Moral Stranglehold in comparing the two situations. Our action and Hungary's are not to be contrasted, but aligned.

Further, when the respective actions of Britain and France are compared with those of Russia, both in regard to UNO and their approaches to the two problems, the patience and restraint of the former and the cynicism and brutality of the latter do not leave much room for any excessive self-reproach.

It has been said that Britain "went it alone" in the case of the Canal dispute. Even if that matters, it is not true. We were supported by France, Australia, New Zealand and Belgium. This being so, it is argued that they should be feeling a Moral Stranglehold as well?

And now we are told that America, belatedly, and not for the first time, is contemplating sending troops to the Middle East to do the job we began, but were opposed in the continuation of, and not allowed, except at the risk of war with America herself among others, to complete. If she should send troops, would she also become subject to the sense of Moral Stranglehold? I think not. Rather, I believe, she would feel that she was at last doing what she should have done before, and what she should not have threatened and menaced as for doing.

I confess, Sir, after having watched events for many years in the Middle East, I have often felt that British policy was too hesitant and too compliant. I am not therefore prepared to lament her recent act of firmness, but only the policies of those who frustrated her in the doing of that which they will increasingly come to see was right.—Yours,

Nicosia, Cyprus.

Griffith J. Sparham.

Hawtham: 80 members and friends sat down at the Dickens Dinner on Saturday, December 22, held in aid of the Hungarian Relief Fund as well as of the Church Funds. Collecting boxes for the Essex Hall Relief Fund were in the Hall. Over £100 was received in subscriptions. Children sang carols and read lessons at the Carol Service on the following day.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 130, 1957

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Miscellaneous

The Unitarian Church, Church Street, Preston, wish to have particulars of any Communion Plate available. Replies to Secretary, 21 Kingfisher Street, Preston, Lancs.

North and East Lancashire Unitarian and Free Christian Lay-Preachers' Association.—The fourth annual gathering was held on December 15, 1956, at Halliwell Road, Bolton. At the annual meeting, held in the afternoon, Mrs. F. Simon, of Newchurch, was declared President for the coming year. The following appointments were made: Vice-President, Mrs. F. Wager (Preston); Ex-President, Mr. W. L. Naylor (Blackpool); Treasurer, Mr. Raoul Lee (Atherton); Committee: Mr. E. Hutton (Atherton), Mr. T. Stott (Rochdale), Mr. J. E. Thomas; Secretary, Mr. Leslie Procter.

Since the formation of the association 629 services had been conducted by members, and the fees received had been used in travelling expenses, postages and books. In the evening a service was held.

Ministers, Lay Pastors and Secretaries are asked to recommend persons who are suited to become members of the North and East Lancashire Unitarian and Free Christian Lay-Preachers' Association. Confidentially to Leslie Procter, Secretary, at Willow House, Waterfoot, Rossendale, Lancs.

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